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GATES/PRESIDENT  
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Sen. William Cohen, R-Maine, said Tuesday the Reagan administration "amputated" nearly all of the rest of government from the decision to sell arms to Iran because the policy had so little support.

"There was such distrust within the administration on this program they decided to short-circuit the entire system -- don't let State know what's going on, if State knows it will get out to the press, don't let (Defense) know what's going on with the exception of a few key people, cut the CIA out with the exception of the director and a few others, and cut Congress out all together," Cohen told CIA Director-designate Robert Gates at his confirmation hearing.

"In this case the system wasn't just bypassed, the system was amputated," he said.

With the opposition of Secretary of State George Shultz, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and others, Cohen asked Gates, how could such a policy have been carried out?

"I think that the only answer possible is that the president made the decision," Gates replied. "Those are his advisers but he is not obligated to take their advice."